

August 21, 2022 Meeker Christian Church PDL #4

CREATED TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST is this #4 Purpose Driven Life chapter heading. It is a powerful earthshaking concept for our finite minds to grasp a hint of the greater meaning of what it means to be created to become like Christ. /// The word to our rescue in that title is “become.” /// None of us are like Christ yet, but that is no excuse for not continuing with super determined persistence to pursue the absolute righteousness modeled by our Lord and Savior Jesus!

God’s plan has always been to make you like Jesus Christ Ephesians 4:15 ESV *15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ,*

Rom 8:29 (LB) *From the very beginning God decided that those who came to Him - and He knew who would - should become like His Son...*

To gain this understanding we have studied our Purpose #1, Worship, Purpose #2, Fellowship and now our 3rd purpose in life is to become like Christ. “This process of changing us to be more like Jesus is called sanctification.”

In this context, the idea is that God is disciplining all of us who are actively seeking Him. We might reasonably ask: "How does God help me grow spiritually to become more like Jesus?" It is a matter of discipleship being sanctified, becoming more and more like Jesus.

1. God uses the Bible truths to transform us. If you really want to grow up spiritually, you’ve got to get into the Bible a small group study has proven a very effective tool...

2. Another thing God uses is people, and that’s why last week we talked about the importance and critical purpose of fellowship in our lives. When we learn from each other, we grow and we develop. And the more you get with other Christians, the more spiritually mature you’re going to become as you grow because you’re spending time with them. - You rub off on each other, you influence each other with the positive virtues of Godly values. A healthy spiritual environment produces a healthy spiritual life, just as a healthy physical environment produces a healthy physical life. ///One of the big tasks in parenting is bringing a child up in the right environment for spiritual as well as physical well being.

3. God uses more than the Bible and people, He uses all things in life to help us grow spiritually. Romans 8:28 *"In all things God works for the good for those who*

love Him, who have been called according to His purposes." that verse tells us what His purpose has always been. God works all things for good to make us like Jesus. It doesn't say all things are good because there's a lot of bad in the world, but God uses all things to make us like Christ. Look at Jesus as a further example: He had trouble in the garden. He had temptation in the desert, and He had trespasses on the cross. And if you're going to grow to be like Jesus Christ, - God's going to take you through these same types of experiences. These things don't automatically help you grow. You have to have your heart ready, because if your heart isn't ready you're going to become bitter by these things rather than better by these experiences.

satan has tried to convince the world's populations that trials and tribulations of life prove there is no loving God. The counterfeiter has taken the truth and corrupted it in the reality of life. In that regard there are three unexpected tools God uses to guide us in our sojourn to become more Christlike.

1. God uses trouble to teach us to trust Him. In the Bible this word "trouble" is often called "trials", and "trials are situations designed by God to draw us closer to Him." They're not designed to hurt us; they're designed to help us. If things go great in your life. It doesn't take any faith, it doesn't take any character. So God has to bring some things along in our life to stretch us, to cause us to grow, and these are called trials. God wants to build character in you. How does He do it? Look at Romans 5:3-4 KJV *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*

Rom 5:3-4 ESV *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,*

God says that the goal of life is character, not your career; the goal of life is character, not your own personal comfort. Until you understand this, life isn't going to make very much sense. All kinds of problems are going to come into your life — troubles, trials, difficulties — and you're going ask, "Why me Lord? Why is this happening to me?" as if your life is supposed to be a life of comfort. Well it's not. The goal of life is not comfort. That is reserved for the heavenly life and this is not heaven!

Jesus went through many troubles and trials in His life, but His greatest was the night before He was crucified. He knew what He was going to have to face the next day, and the intensity of that turmoil in His heart was enormous. He was going to

take the sin of the world on Himself. He was going to die a horrible death by crucifixion. He went to a place called Gethsemane where He asked His disciples to stay with Him while He prayed. And notice what it says; Mark 14:32 *"They came to a garden called Gethsemane and Jesus said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray".*" Did you notice? Jesus needed friends when He went through troubles. That's why you need a small group. That's why you need fellowship. Nobody is supposed to go through the troubles of life alone.

Mark 14:34 *The stress and anguish came over Jesus, and He said, The sorrow in My heart is so great that it almost crushes Me...*" /// Most of you can honestly say, "I know that feeling of when I felt like I couldn't make it another day." Notice how Jesus responded to trouble in the next two verse. Mark 14:35-36 *Going a little farther, He fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 36 "Father," He said, "everything is possible for You. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet, I want Your will, not Mine!"*

If you're going to become like Jesus Christ, you've got to learn to trust God completely, even when things look terrible. God uses trouble to teach us to trust Him. It's easy to trust God when everything is going great in our lives. The real test of faith is when you don't feel good. So, the next time you get into some troubles and you ask, "Why is this happening?" You will know why. - God is teaching you to trust Him.

2. There is a second surprising way that God works in our lives to make us become more like Jesus. God uses **temptations** to teach us to **obey** Him. ///It's important to be real clear about the definition of temptation. Temptations are situations designed by the evil one and his demons and they are intended to harm us! God never tempts us to do evil. The Bible is very clear about that. Temptations are designed by the devil to hurt us.

Jesus never sinned, but He faced temptations from the evil one./// Right after He was baptized at the very beginning of his public ministry at the age of 30, He went through an intense 40-day period of temptation out in the desert. Look at what the Bible has to say in Matthew 4:1. *"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil"*. Now, if Jesus faced temptations, you and I are going to face temptations, too. The fact that Jesus faced temptations reminds us of some truths about temptation that help us to get through it.

It is not a sin to be tempted. Jesus never sinned, yet He was tempted. The Bible says we're all tempted in the same common ways. You never get to a point in your life where you become so spiritual or so old, that you're not tempted anymore. That is reserved for heaven. It is also important to remember that Jesus teaches us in His

experience that every temptation is an opportunity to do good, to make the right choice. It's a stepping stone toward becoming more like Jesus Christ. Notice what Jesus did when he was tempted in Matthew 4:10. Jesus said, *"Get out of here, Satan. The scriptures say, worship only the Lord God. Obey only Him"*.

Here's the point. Temptation always tests whether you love God more than the temptation./// It's always a test of what do I love the most in my life. When I'm tempted by money, it's a temptation. Do I love God most or do I love money most in my life? When I'm tempted by a wrong relationship, it's a temptation. Do I love that person or do I love God more in my life? When I'm tempted by comfort, I just like to be comfortable in my life, it's a temptation. Who do I love more? My reputation? Who - do- I- love- more? God or that temptation that's come into my life? ///Obedience, choosing to say, "yes" to God, it's a matter of love. The Bible tells us what Jesus said, John 14:15 *"If you love Me, obey My command"*. /// Let me give you a quick tip about handling temptation; When you are tempted, don't consciously try to fight against it!!! Because that just causes you to think about the temptation! You're getting into a spiritual tug-of-war with the evil one, and he always wins in a direct confrontation. ///- Just walk a different direction and think about something different. If you'll take a Bible verse and let it turn your mind from what's wrong to what's right, you'll find that the temptation starts to drop away. You keep focused on good thoughts... That is one really good reason for memorizing some favorite Bible verses.

3. There is a third surprising way that God works in our lives to make us become more like Jesus. **God uses trespasses to teach us to forgive.** Trials are situations designed by God to draw us closer to Him and temptations are situations designed by the devil to draw us away from Him. Trespasses are situations designed by other people to hurt us. That is why the Bible says in the model Prayer of the Lord; Matthew 6:12 *"forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us."* - Now this is the tough one. It's one thing to handle trouble and it's another thing to handle temptation. But bearing the hurt of trespasses, when other people hurt us is without a doubt, the most important and the most difficult step in becoming like Jesus Christ, because it often involves being misunderstood, being criticized, being judged, being hurt physically or emotionally or verbally, it may involve abuse. Even Jesus was misunderstood and hurt and judged and abused. What makes you think you or I are going to be let off the hook? - You see, on the cross Jesus Christ not only carried our sins, He also endured enormous abuse from the people who were right there. Matthew 27:39-44 says, *"The people passing by (looking at Jesus on the cross) shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus.....and*

the elders made fun of Him.....Even the criminals who had been crucified with Him insulted him in the same way." And what was His response? Look at Luke 22:34 "Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people, because they don't know what they are doing"". In 1 Pet. 2:23 it says this "They called Him every name in the book and He said nothing back. He suffered in silence, intent to let God set things right". --What did Jesus do? What was His response to trespasses? He yielded His right to get even. He absorbed the hurt. He put up with the pain. He responded to evil with good.

Now again, this is the toughest one, so let me give you two little helps for when people harm you intentionally **or even more often I sincerely believe it happens unintentionally.** Number one, remember that God has **forgiven you.** The Bible says Ephesians 4:32 *"Forgive others, just as God forgave you because of Christ."* God will never ask you to forgive anybody more than you have already been forgiven by Him. Number two help is to remember **God is in control.** When you're being hurt by somebody else, yes, they may mean it for bad, but God will use it for good in your life. In fact that's the very thing Joseph said when he was betrayed by his own family as recorded in the Bible; in Genesis 50:20, *"You meant to hurt me, but God turned your evil into good to save the lives of many people, which is being done."* God uses trouble to teach us to trust, and God uses temptation to teach us to obey, and God uses trespasses to teach us to forgive, because we can't become like Jesus without learning to **trust and obey and forgive.** ///

As we have seen, God's third purpose for your life is to make you like Jesus Christ. Then He's going to take you through similar things that Jesus went through. That means He's going to take you through a Gethsemane experience of trouble, where you learn to trust His love. He's going to take you through a desert experience of temptation, where you learn to obey Him and do the right thing. And He's going to take you to the cross, a time of trespass, where you learn to forgive. But there is a promise recorded for us in Romans 8:16-17 *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.* All this is our experience of discipleship because we are created to become like Jesus. It is all summed up in Phil. 2:5; *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."*

The reality is that if you have never opened your life to Jesus Christ, then you cannot know Him. Perhaps you need to pray, "Jesus, I can't live like you unless I know you. So I want to get to know You today. As much as I know how, I want to ask You to come into my life and heart. In Your name I pray, Amen."